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Interview of Ann Clwyd MP, on ABC morning news bulletin, 9 May 1990

Some fifty people from several London-based organisations rallied outside the Australian High Commission on 8 May to protest against the Australian Government for entering into a treaty with Indonesia to exploit East Timor's off-shore oil and natural gas.

The rally was attended by Ann Clwyd MP, Opposition Front Bench spokesperson for overseas aid, and Alice Mahon MP. Ann Clwyd was interviewed on Australian radio for the ABC's morning bulletin on 9 May.

Introduction by Michael Dodd, ABC

The British Labour Opposition has hit out at its fraternal colleagues in the Hawke Government over its treaty with Indonesia to exploit the oil and natural gas in the Timor Gap, a treaty awaiting ratification by the Australian Parliament.

British Labour's Shadow Minister for Overseas Development, Ann Clwyd, has joined those who claim the oil and gas belong to the people of East Timor and that neither Australia nor Indonesia have any rights to it. Ann Clwyd made her comments while taking part in a demonstration outside Australian House in London.

Several dozen protestors sang and held placards outside the High Commission in a bid to draw international attention to the treaty which they said undermined East Timor's struggle for independence which has continued since the Indonesian invasion of 1975. The demonstrators called on Australian parliamentarians to refuse to ratify what they described as 'an unholy pact' to exploit resources which should rightfully be used by the East Timorese, if and when they achieve their independence.

The demonstration was organised by TAPOL, the Indonesia Human Rights Campaign based in Britain. Ms Clwyd endorsed the campaign's claim that, by ratifying the Treaty, Australia would be sharing the spoils of one of the century's most brutal wars.

Ann Clwyd: As I understand it in the past, Indonesia has been criticised by Australia for annexing East Timor. Indeed, in past meetings of the Decolonisation Committee at the United Nations which I went to last August, Australia has been represented. So obviously, there is a body of opinion in Australia which is concerned about the rights of East Timor and whether Indonesia has the right at all to sign a treaty of this kind when the national rights of East Timor appeared to have been ignored.

Dodd: Is there any other way to exploit the oil and natural gas between Australia and Indonesia without signing a treaty like this one?
Ann Clwyd: I think the situation in East Timor should be examined to see whether it is in Indonesia's power to actually sign *any* treaty on behalf of East Timor. It was annexed by force, as everybody knows. A third of the population was killed and, why should East Timor be Indonesia's 27th colony? Does Australia in fact support taking over countries in this way without those countries' agreement?
Dodd: As a Labour Party politician, why do you believe it is that the people in the Australian Labour Party and Government don't agree with you?

Clwyd: Well, I don't know whether that would be true of all of them in the same way as I wouldn't like to always speak for the whole of the Labour Party in the United Kingdom on a particular issue. Certainly a lot of my Labour colleagues (in Australia) have joined Parliamentarians for East Timor and now we have parliamentarians in many countries who are arguing the rights of East Timor and want the United Nations Decolonisation Committee and Secretary General of the UN to look again at the situation.

It was taken over by force and the UN, given that it has a code of conduct for the decolonisation of countries, should be critical of its own performance as far as East Timor is concerned.

tapol

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